Royal Oak resident to be in baby boomer documentary

By Jeremy Carroll
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ROYAL OAK — It was a simple chance encounter at a boot camp for job hunters that led to Royal Oak resident Sylvia Bandyke being interviewed alongside many of her generation’s most prominent executives and celebrities for an upcoming documentary by Tom Brokaw.

Bandyke was one of five University of Michigan graduates to be interviewed for the documentary “Boomers,” which will air on CNBC at 9 p.m. March 4. The two-hour documentary takes an in-depth look into the baby boomer generation, with interviews from the famous and non-famous alike.

Bandyke, after being laid off from Ford Motor Co. in early 2009, was at an event hosted by U-M Dearborn, where she met an official with the school. Just after that meeting, the school was contacted about finding baby boomers for the documentary.

“They were looking for people who had lost their jobs, or worked for the automotive companies,” she said. “I certainly fit.”

Bandyke started at Ford after getting a master’s degree from Michigan in English in
1970. She became a technical writer in the engineering department. As the years wore on, she shifted focus, and became part of the information technology support team at Ford in 1993 when the company began issuing computers to employees.

“I really loved the job,” she said. “It was always very challenging.”

But after several rounds of buyouts, the need was still there to cut more personnel. Bandyke was let go in January of 2009 — she continues to look for work.

Bandyke was interviewed with four other Michigan graduates with different backgrounds and experiences by Brokaw in September in Ann Arbor.

“He had pointed questions for everyone,” she said.

Bandyke said she discussed being at Michigan in the late 1960s, breaking into a male-dominated business and dealing with job loss late in her career.

She said her job hunting has been helped by two groups, the First United Methodist Church in Royal Oak and Walsh College’s Take Charge program. Both offer support and training for those seeking work.

“I don’t feel like an old person, even though I’m on the forefront of the boomer generation,” she said, declining to give her age. “I have potential that is unrealized. I’m not ready to go off and retire.”

Given the opportunity, Bandyke said she was interested in making a career transition to something within the health care field that will allow her to use her ability to write.

According to CNBC, others interviewed for the documentary include actor Tom Hanks, political satirist P.J. O’Rourke, executives from Xerox Corp. and Senator and Vietnam veteran Jim Webb, D-Virginia.

CNBC plans to rerun the program March 6, 7 and 8.

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